

Operational Guidelines for Community Gardens on City Land Other Than City Parks

The City of Vancouver (the “City”) recognizes community gardens as more than places to share one’s passion for gardening. Community gardening is a valuable activity that can contribute to community development and education, increased self-reliance, community health, public open space, wildlife habitat, environmental awareness, and positive social interaction.

The City is addressing food insecurity through the creation of community gardens as a means to relieve hunger, improve nutrition, and increase access to and distribution of food for its residents.

Definition:

For the purposes of these Operational Guidelines for Community Gardens on City Land Other Than City Parks, (the “Guidelines”), a community garden is defined as a place on City-owned land, other than City parks, operated or overseen by a non-profit Societies, where people grow and maintain ornamental and edible plants. Residential boulevard gardens, Green Streets Program gardens and beautification projects are not included in this definition of community gardens.

Community gardens on City land other than City parks may exist in any area of the city and should serve one or more of the following purposes:

- produce edible and ornamental plants for the personal use of Societies members;
- grow food for the garden members’ benefit through skill building programs or City approved economic development training opportunities;
- grow food to donate to charitable causes.

Once a suitable City-owned site has been located for a community garden, the following conditions will apply:

1. A community consultation process, jointly undertaken by the non-profit Societies (the “Societies”) and the City, indicates neighbourhood support for the garden;
2. The Societies agrees to create their own membership agreements, and develop and operate the garden according to the Guidelines and the Community Garden Licence, (the “Licence”) which specify terms of use, management responsibilities, and procedures;
3. The standard term of use will be five (5) years unless the specific terms of use dictate otherwise.
 - a. Should cancellation of the Licence be required, a minimum of ninety (90) days written notice will be provided to the Societies and whenever possible, with the cancellation taking effect after the growing season for that year has been completed.
 - b. Notwithstanding, in an emergency such as an unexpected infrastructure repair, the City would require immediate access to the site.
4. The garden is developed and maintained at no cost to the City, except that prior to the first season, the City will, at its cost, prepare the site for planting by removing undesirable vegetation, leveling the land, adding compost and providing a water service to the property;

5. A comprehensive garden site plan must be approved by City staff. The plan shall include the layout of the plots, irrigation, accessible pathways, trees, garden art, paved areas, picnic areas, compost areas and indicate the locations and dimensions of all proposed temporary structures and fences;
6. An ornamental perimeter garden must be provided between the community garden and the adjacent lands and street to create an attractive buffer with the neighbourhood. Fences are permitted around the larger community garden and may not be more than one meter high;
7. All gardens shall include provisions for accessibility for seniors and/or disabled persons, as well as fully accessible paths.
8. In addition, two (2) plots of average size designated for one of the following: a) a local non-profit, b) a neighbouring child-care centre, or c) a common area for food grown for charitable purposes;
9. The City requires \$2 million liability insurance for all gardens prior to issuing or renewing a Licence. Liability insurance requirements may be modified at the discretion of the Directors of Risk Management and Legal Services.

General rules for community gardens:

1. Allotments of space must be made from a waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis to any resident of Vancouver with preference to those with no garden plots elsewhere and who reside or work in the local neighbourhood;
2. Community gardens are for chemical-free gardening only. Section 5.17 of the Health By-law No. 6580 (City of Vancouver's Pesticide Use Restriction By-law), restricts the application of synthetic pesticides, including insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides. Synthetic fertilizers are not to be used;
3. Plots must be planted by May 25, with exceptions made for extreme weather. Plots not utilized by this date must be reassigned;
4. Plots must be tidied and prepared for winter by November 1 preferably by mulching, planting cover crop seeds, and/or winter crop gardening;
5. Water is a limited resource, and should be used sparingly. Gardeners are encouraged to collect and use rainwater for irrigation;
6. Tires are not permitted;
7. Garbage service is not provided. Trash removal is the responsibility of the community garden;
8. Best practices must be used in the management of compost bins and windfalls to deter pests;
9. The general public is to have access to the garden at all times. Locked barriers are not permitted;
10. Bees may be kept in community gardens in accordance with the City's hobby beekeeping guideline